



South Central Idaho News

BLAINE, CAMAS, CASSIA, GOODING, JEROME, LINCOLN, MINIDOKA & TWIN FALLS COUNTIES

ECONOMIC TRENDS

The seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for May dropped radically from April's estimate of 3.2 percent to 2 percent for the Twin Falls-Jerome Micropolitan area. This is almost a full point and a half below May 2005's rate of 3.4 percent. There are fewer people unemployed due to continued pent-up demand for workers and the spike in demand due to the prime employment season. But the Bureau of Labor Statistics estimate in May was driven more by the results of what's known as the Current Population Survey than by other factors such as job creation, reports from employers and unemployment insurance claims. The results of that survey can be highly volatile from month to month because it covers only 600 of Idaho's 530,000 households.

Clearly the labor force in the Twin Falls-Jerome area is gearing up for a busy summer and continuing on through the remainder of the year. However, it is believed that this month's freefall in the jobless rate will be seen as an anomaly as figures are compiled through the summer months. The region's growth areas are in construction, retail, education, health care, manufacturing, agriculture, transportation and warehousing as its population continues climbing at a sustained 2 percent to 4 percent a year.

The reality is that to have a talented and dependable work force, all employers will have to:

- ✱ *Provide competitive wages and benefits.*
- ✱ *Develop a creative recruitment and retention plan.*
- ✱ *Establish flexible hiring standards and flexible scheduling practices.*
- ✱ *Research and implement accommodations for the growing number of individuals with physical limitations that do not preclude their ability to accomplish the job duties.*

South Central Idaho Table 1: Twin Falls-Jerome MicSA Labor Force & Employment—Twin Falls and Jerome counties

| | May 2007* | Apr 2007 | May 2006 | % Change From | |
|--|--------------|-------------|-------------|---------------|--------------|
| | | | | Last Month | Last Year |
| INDIVIDUALS BY PLACE OF RESIDENCE | | | | | |
| <i>Seasonally Adjusted</i> | | | | | |
| Civilian Labor Force | 48,660 | 48,640 | 49,530 | 0.0 | -1.8 |
| Unemployment | 980 | 1,580 | 1,590 | -38.0 | -38.4 |
| % of Labor Force Unemployed | 2.0 | 3.2 | 3.2 | | |
| Total Employment | 47,680 | 47,060 | 47,940 | 1.3 | -0.5 |
| <i>Unadjusted</i> | | | | | |
| Civilian Labor Force | 48,750 | 48,290 | 49,670 | 1.0 | -1.9 |
| Unemployment | 760 | 1,590 | 1,400 | -52.2 | -45.7 |
| % of Labor Force Unemployed | 1.6 | 3.3 | 2.8 | | |
| Total Employment | 47,990 | 46,700 | 48,270 | 2.8 | -0.6 |
| JOBS BY PLACE OF WORK | | | | | |
| Nonfarm Payroll Jobs** | 40,580 | 40,070 | 38,930 | 1.3 | 4.2 |
| <i>Goods-Providing Industries</i> | 7,480 | 7,350 | 6,930 | 1.8 | 7.9 |
| Natural Resources & Mining | 40 | 30 | 30 | 33.3 | 33.3 |
| Construction | 2,490 | 2,400 | 2,410 | 3.8 | 3.3 |
| Manufacturing | 4,950 | 4,920 | 4,490 | 0.6 | 10.2 |
| Food Manufacturing | 2,640 | 2,630 | 2,400 | 0.4 | 10.0 |
| Other Manufacturing | 2,310 | 2,290 | 2,090 | 0.9 | 10.5 |
| <i>Service-Providing Industries</i> | 33,100 | 32,720 | 32,000 | 1.2 | 3.4 |
| Trade, Transportation & Utilities | 9,840 | 9,900 | 9,630 | -0.6 | 2.2 |
| Wholesale Trade | 1,900 | 1,900 | 1,870 | 0.0 | 1.6 |
| Retail Trade | 5,720 | 5,780 | 5,760 | -1.0 | -0.7 |
| Utilities | 150 | 150 | 170 | 0.0 | -11.8 |
| Transportation & Warehousing | 2,070 | 2,070 | 1,830 | 0.0 | 13.1 |
| Information | 650 | 640 | 630 | 1.6 | 3.2 |
| Financial Activities | 1,620 | 1,600 | 1,700 | 1.3 | -4.7 |
| Professional & Business Services | 4,960 | 4,680 | 4,920 | 6.0 | 0.8 |
| Educational & Health Services | 5,120 | 5,020 | 3,420 | 2.0 | 49.7 |
| Leisure & Hospitality | 3,380 | 3,270 | 3,190 | 3.4 | 6.0 |
| Other Services | 1,480 | 1,480 | 1,390 | 0.0 | 6.5 |
| Government Education | 3,550 | 3,710 | 3,200 | -4.3 | 10.9 |
| Government Administration | 2,500 | 2,420 | 3,920 | 3.3 | -36.2 |

*Preliminary Estimate

**Full- or part-time jobs of people who worked for or received wages in the pay period including the 12th of the month

- ✱ *Provide needed training through on-the-job training or assistance in obtaining secondary or post-secondary education.*

The latest city population estimates show Twin Falls added more people than any other city in the area at 1,600 to push total population over 40,000 in 2006, and Filer posted the highest growth rate of 5.4 percent between 2005 and 2006. Kimberly, another bedroom

community of Twin Falls, saw solid growth of 3.4 percent. This differs from southwestern Idaho, where the population is relocating from Boise to lower cost suburbs like Kuna, Star and Meridian. That indicates that living in Twin Falls is still affordable. With the softened housing market, real estate prices may settle into a comfortable compromise with surrounding communities.

High-growth commercial construction is just getting revved up and will likely pick up the construction workers who spent the last five years working on residential housing. The city of Twin Falls saw building permits for single family homes fall off 74 percent in May. Interest rates are still considered low from a historical perspective so they should not create a slow down on the commercial side. However, considering rates have crawled up almost a point over the last year, it may curtail market activity in simply upgrading homes, especially when any reduction in home prices would likely be eaten up by the higher interest rate. Fortunately, this area is experiencing a good proportion of in-migration from other states and even other countries. Many grandparents are retiring here from high cost-of-living areas to be closer to children and grandchildren and enjoy the quality of life, having cashed out of much more expensive homes.

CAMAS COUNTY

- Fairfield City Hall has just emerged from a three-year long remodel that included a new roof, log siding, a larger meeting area, new furniture, lighting, paint and carpet. The cost of \$22,000 does not reflect the value of the project that included significant volunteer hours and material donations.
- Fairfield city officials and Camas County officials are considering expanding the Fairfield's area of impact to include Soldier, an unincorporated community. A building moratorium has been implemented and will expire at the end of September. Expanding the impact area would allow the city to become proactively involved in planning following a recent annexation.

MINI-CASSIA

- Minidoka County commissioners have declared a state of emergency due to drought. The decision came as Water Resource Director David Tuthill accepted a mitigation plan from groundwater pumpers that ended the threat of shutting down wells irrigating 16,000 acres
- Intrepid Technology & Resources designs and operates digesters for dairy waste, and Whitesides Dairy was the first to integrate the process into its operation and produce pipeline-quality methane gas that is sold to natural gas providers. The process also

converts the remaining solids into a peat moss substitute. The product is ready after approximately 40 days and the solid content has been reduced to less than 4 percent. The final by-product, the waste water used in the processing, can be recycled for use in the next digestion process. Intrepid estimates that Whitesides Dairy has processed over 10 million gallons of manure in the last two years. It currently produces sufficient methane gas to heat 5,000 homes. It is estimated that the initial investment of a dairy can be recouped within three years.

- Kodiak Northwest, a company that manufactures snow removal equipment, will use a \$24,000 incentive from Business Plus to get its operations ramped up. It will be moving from Paul to the former Rite-Aid building in Burley, expanding employment from 60 to 75 workers. Kodiak assembles machined and painted parts into large snow blowers and other heavy equipment. Business Plus is an economic development organization funded by private industry to promote positive economic growth in south central Idaho.

BLAINE COUNTY

- Our Lady of the Snows Catholic Church is building a new church in Sun Valley. The dedication is tentatively set for Dec. 13.
- Sun Valley's only private golf course and country club, Valley Club, has added nine new holes to its existing 18-hole course. The designer, Tom Fazio, is known around the country for building beautiful and interesting courses that look well-established and mature. He makes the course appear more difficult than it is and gives it an uncluttered look. Stoney Brown, who has been club director at Valley Club for four years after 29 years at Crane Creek Country Club in Boise, believes "intimidation is huge on this course."
- Fourth Street Heritage Corridor is still in its infancy but renovations have progressed to the point that future Fourth of July celebrations will be scheduled on the newly constructed pedestrian corridor. This first phase has included widening the sidewalks, narrowing the streets, installing new streetlights, creating gathering places with public art and accommodating bike paths at a cost of approximately \$900,000. The entire project will cost \$4.5 million. These same amenities will eventually cover an eight-block area. Two to three blocks are being re-done each year.
- The Friedman Airport is approaching its busiest season, July and August, when the number of flights

doubles from nearly 4,000 to almost 8,000. The Allen & Company media conference is scheduled for July 10, and corporate jets normally exceed parking capacity so some are either diverted to Twin Falls or returned to their home airports. The noise and congestion can be a nuisance so corporate flight departments are given suggested guidelines on airport approach, departure and curfews in an effort to help everyone maintain their cool through the busy summer season.

TWIN FALLS COUNTY

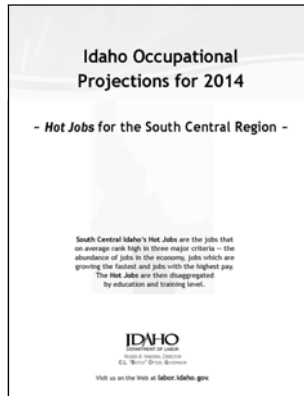
- A new seed testing lab, BioDiagnostics West LLC, cut the ribbon for its 6,000-square-foot laboratory in Twin Falls. The lab has 10 employees including three experienced registered seed technicians. This is a coup for the Twin Falls company since there are only 180 registered seed technicians in the United States and Canada. In addition, the technicians can conduct the required Department of Agriculture testing prior to labeling and shipping seed.
- Valley Coop has closed its Twin Falls location because of poor store performance. It will retain a couple of employees to work at other stores in the region with the rest laid off. The coop currently has outlets in Buhl, Gooding, Jerome and Shoshone, selling fuel, livestock and farm supplies. Fuel was the missing component for the Twin Falls location and would have created more foot traffic.
- The Skippers restaurant, a long-time fixture on Blue Lakes Boulevard, has closed its doors. The restaurant was always busiest during Lent when fish and seafood demand was at its highest in the community. The parent company is declaring bankruptcy. Skippers Inc., founded in Bellevue, Wash., in 1969, experienced rapid expansion in the Northwest and British Columbia. It had 60 restaurants in Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Utah, Montana and Alaska.
- The College of Southern Idaho has experienced a favorable response to its mix of summer offerings. Enrollment has increased almost 13 percent from last summer's enrollment with core classes such as science, mathematics and English along with education and health care classes showing the highest enrollment figures.
- Idaho's region IV, which includes the eight counties of Blaine, Camas, Cassia, Gooding, Jerome, Lincoln, Minidoka and Twin Falls, has been awarded a three-year, \$5 million grant from the U.S. Department of Labor to develop a work force initiative that enhances training in high-demand occupations, targets workers who do not have a high school diploma or speak English as a second language. The

grant will be administered in partnership with the College of Southern Idaho, local school districts, the Idaho Department of Labor and local economic development organizations.

- The Filer School Board has voted to submit a \$14 million bond to voters to build a new intermediate school for fourth through sixth grades and upgrade and expand existing facilities. This would free up space in elementary schools and the Filer Middle School. The city experienced 5.7 percent population growth from 2005 to 2006, the 11th strongest in the state and highest in the region.
- Buhl's LaPlaza's restaurant had a grand opening at the end of June for the newly expanded restaurant. Seating capacity was increased by 70 and new waitresses will be hired to handle the additional demand. The family-operated restaurant opened three years ago, offering family recipes.
- Buhl has a new alteration and clothing design business — Made by Hand. The owner will do custom designing and sewing as well as alterations and repairs. She has lived in Buhl for nine years and will be operating from her home.
- A grand opening was held June 1 for the new owner of the Arctic Circle and Avid Sportsman in Buhl. The Avid Sportsman is a gasoline and convenience store and sporting goods retailer. The new owners are active in the community and anticipate continuing with that tradition of service.
- Ben's Construction is a new addition to the Buhl area, offering repairs, remodeling, new construction and concrete work. The owner emigrated from Brazil 15 years ago.

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South central Idaho's Hot Jobs are the jobs that on average rank high in three major criteria — the abundance of jobs in the economy, jobs that are growing the fastest and jobs with the highest pay.



This publication, available at lmi.idaho.gov, lists the disaggregated **Hot Jobs** by education and training level. From the Web site, choose Area LMI from the top menu. Then choose the region of interest from the statewide map.